

C.E.O. of the Tacoma, Washington-based Columbia Bank, for being named a Community Banker of the Year by American Banker magazine.

Melanie joined Columbia Bank in 1993 and ten years later was named its Chief Executive Officer. Under Melanie's leadership, Columbia Bank acquired five other banks, increasing the bank's assets by fifty percent. These actions have helped Dressel transform Columbia Bank into a regional power.

Despite the bank's growth, Melanie has remained close to traditional community banking practices. Columbia Bank is committed to giving individuals and businesses in the Pacific Northwest a safe, secure, and customer-focused banking option.

Throughout her tenure, Columbia Bank has consistently been honored as one of the region's best places to work. The bank is regularly featured on the Puget Sound Business Journal's "Washington's Best Workplaces" list and listed as "One of Washington's 100 Best Companies to Work For" by Seattle Magazine. Even during challenging economic times, it is encouraging to see Columbia Bank going the extra mile to ensure employee satisfaction.

Mr. Speaker, it is with great pleasure that I ask my colleagues to join me in honoring Melanie Dressel. Her dedication to community banking has helped grow Columbia Bank to provide exemplary service its customers, employees, and our community.

#### RECOGNIZING SUSAN STECHNIJ

#### HON. ALCEE L. HASTINGS

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Thursday, February 2, 2012*

Mr. HASTINGS of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to honor the work of Susan Stechnij in the Palm Beach area of Florida. Susan is one of the landlords at the Everglades Inn, a member of the Homeless and Housing Alliance of Palm Beach County. She shares my passion for helping the homeless in the community and in the fight to prevent and end homelessness.

Recently, Susan was honored with an award to denote her special contribution to the homeless people of West Palm Beach. The Lord's Place, a nonprofit organization focused on ending the cycle of homelessness in the area, honored Susan with the Unsung Heroine Award. She was awarded this honor for helping a dying homeless man find relief in the last few weeks of his life. Due to her hard work, the man was able to live comfortably in an apartment rather than facing the difficult conditions that the homeless are faced with on a daily basis.

Mr. Speaker, Susan deserves to be recognized for her heroic efforts. People like Susan serve an important role in communities across the state of Florida and the country. Her compassion and selflessness in helping those less fortunate is commendable, and I am proud to recognize her as a Hastings' Hero.

#### IN RECOGNITION OF NICK AND TRACY BROWN

#### HON. FRANK PALLONE, JR.

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Thursday, February 2, 2012*

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate Mr. Nick Brown and Mrs. Tracy Brown for their immeasurable contributions to their community and the subsequent honor they have received during Prevention First's "Fly Me to the Moon" Gala on February 4, 2012. The Browns are valuable members of my district and assets to their communities and country. Their actions are truly worthy of this body's recognition.

Mrs. Tracy Brown has admirably served on numerous boards for various organizations throughout Monmouth County, New Jersey. She is a hardworking member of the Monmouth Medical Center Foundation Board and has dedicated countless hours to the Ranney School Annual Fund committee. Mrs. Brown has also co-chaired the Count Basie Gala, Prevention First Gala and the Visiting Nurses Association Show House Gala. Tracy is a member of the Prevention First Executive Committee and remains an integral part of its Board. Together, Tracy and Prevention First's continued efforts have had a resounding effect in preventing alcohol and other drug usage in young adults throughout the local community.

Nick Brown's generosity as a philanthropist and valued member of the community is evident through his service. Mr. Brown is the Managing Director and head of Financial Product Brokerage, North and South America, at GFI Group. He is a partner of Jersey Partners, serves as a director of the Financial Markets Association and was formerly a member of the Federal Reserve Bank of New York's Foreign Exchange Steering Committee. In addition to his professional endeavors, Nick currently serves on the boards of the Center to Prevent Youth Violence and the Count Basie Theatre in Red Bank, New Jersey. He also served as a high profile board member for the Brady Campaign to Prevent Gun Violence for 12 years. Nick remains an active board member of HELP USA, a charitable organization dedicated to providing quality housing and on-site supportive services to guide individuals towards independence and self-sufficiency. Together, the Browns have been blessed with five beautiful children, Kristina age 24, Kelli age 22, Peter age 12, Laney age 6, and Lexi age 5.

Mr. Speaker, once again, please join me in congratulating Nick and Tracy Brown for receiving the honors bestowed by Prevention First. Mr. & Mrs. Brown's unending generosity and charitable activities have undoubtedly touched many lives and have helped countless people throughout New Jersey.

#### IN SUPPORT OF FAIR TRIALS AND ACCESS TO COUNSEL FOR THOSE WITH MENTAL DISABILITIES

#### HON. FORTNEY PETE STARK

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Thursday, February 2, 2012*

Mr. STARK. Mr. Speaker, I rise to introduce the Ensuring Mental Competence in Immigra-

tion Proceedings Act. My legislation will make immigration proceedings more fair and humane for individuals with mental disabilities, and help prevent wrongful deportations and indefinite detentions. Specifically, this bill amends the Immigration and Nationality Act to ensure that immigration judges will have the authority to stop proceedings or appoint counsel when an individual is not competent enough to represent him or herself due to a mental disability.

The status quo isn't working. Judges who in good faith have terminated deportation cases because of a person's inability to participate based on mental disability have had their decisions overturned. Consequently, these cases end up in an ongoing loop that keeps these individuals in costly, inhumane detention or results in their unfair deportation.

Examples of immigrants and U.S. citizens with mental disabilities who have been unjustly detained or deported include:

An immigrant from Mexico with severe cognitive disabilities who was declared incompetent by an immigration judge in which he was unrepresented by counsel. His case was put on hold and the Department of Homeland Security allowed him to linger in detention for four and a half years, at a cost to taxpayers of about \$300,000;

A 50-year old legal permanent resident with schizophrenia who had lived in New York more than 30 years was ordered by a New York court to serve 90 days in a mental institution for trespassing. Instead, he was transferred to a detention facility in Texas, where he received no medication for weeks. He then faced a proceeding without counsel, and was deported to the Dominican Republic so quickly that his family did not know what had happened to him until he was gone;

A citizen who had bipolar disorder and developmental disabilities was deported to Mexico, and subsequently to Honduras and Guatemala. It took four months to return him to the United States. ICE officials claim that he signed a statement indicating he was a Mexican national—he was not.

All of these events could have been avoided if immigration judges had the tools they need to properly adjudicate cases involving individuals with mental disabilities, and if these individuals had access to counsel. We cannot allow citizens and immigrants to be wrongly deported or remain in indefinite detention simply because they have a mental disability. By granting judges the ability to discontinue proceedings when an individual is mentally incompetent or to appoint counsel so that the individual receives a fair adjudication, this bill will reduce the costs of long detentions and delayed proceedings and make our immigration system more just.

The National Association of Immigration Judges has asked Congress for reform. Over fifty organizations including Human Rights Watch, the National Disability Rights Network, the American Civil Liberties Union and the American Immigration Lawyers Association endorse the Ensuring Mental Competence in Immigration Proceedings Act. This legislation is the right thing to do for mentally incompetent detainees, for our courts, and for taxpayers. I urge my colleagues to support this bill.